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844 woman's attendant is preferably her mother, but here too expediency will dictate the choice of midwife. Actual birth occurs in the privy-corridor just off the living room, where a group of interested kin, both male and female, may have gathered to chat while awaiting the birth. Children too form part of this group.

Meanwhile the mother sits with her legs spread and tugs at the rafters overhead to help her in her labor. The midwife sits directly opposite with her legs outside of, and parallel to, those of the mother. Between them lies a piece of pandanus mat on which the child is placed as soon as it is born. The midwife cleans the child with the thick juice squeezed beforehand from banana bark. When the afterbirth is ejected, the midwife measures a length of the umbilical cord reaching to the child's knees and severs it with a sharp sliver of bamboo. The end of the cord still attached to the child's body is coiled up on its abdomen. The birth fluids have meanwhile drained through the floor boards to the pigpen below. The afterbirth is placed in an old areca basket and is left to disintegrate in the bamboo thicket on the village boundary. A stillborn child is treated like the placenta. It is interesting that this type of disposal parallels that for human heads and spirit-bird bundles when their ceremonial treatment has been completed.*

533 After completing birth the mother picks up the child, wraps it in
[844] the softest piece of woven or bark cloth available, and joins the group of friends and visitors in the living room. People present suggest various names; those of maternal and paternal grandparents are preferred. If a child begins to urinate or to nurse after a name is suggested, that is
[533] the one adopted. Given names are feminine or masculine. For further identification both men and women carry their father's given name as surname. They never take the stepfather's name.

844 One gathers the impression that birth is considered an easy and casual procedure and that problems in beginning nursing are not a matter of formal concern. This does not mean that difficulties never occur, but it does indicate that the society has not emphasized such difficulties. There is also no emphasis on modesty in connection with birth, although on other occasions there are strong feelings about exposing the genitals. Birth is definitely women's business, but men are not completely excluded.

In this connection, and despite my emphasis on the casualness of the procedure, it is an interesting contradiction that many men feel a certain disgust if they are offered food prepared by a woman who has served recently as a midwife. When I discussed this matter one day

* See pages 130–31 and 160–61 for descriptions of these ceremonies.

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with Fantan the Interpreter in the presence of his sister and a female cousin, he expressed strong feelings about it and his face wore an unmistakable expression of disgust. His sister and cousin began to tease him, referring to his own birth. The discussion ended laughingly—as do many of the good-natured arguments on sex differences—with the comment by Fantan's sister, "Men are bad; women are good." 844

The midwife who assists at a birth is given a small gift, usually a moko, whose value may range from one to three rupiahs. The longer and more difficult the birth, the larger is the fee paid. Midwives who have had to manipulate the child by reaching into the mother's body expect larger fees. [759 465]

There are few anecdotes of difficult births. One woman of about forty, well informed in such matters, could recall only four deaths in childbirth. This is certainly no measure of maternal mortality, but it does indicate both that childbearing is relatively easy and that the culture does not stress the importance and difficulty of the occurrence. No mother died in childbirth during the eighteen months that I was in the village. In the half-dozen births I witnessed, the mothers at no time showed signs of pain beyond acute discomfort. They groaned softly and perspired freely but seemed on the whole to give birth with little difficulty. In one case where the afterbirth was long in coming, the woman massaged her abdomen, scratched her loins, and combed the knots out of her hair—devices that were all believed to assist her in labor. 845

After giving birth the mother stays in the house from four to six days, which seems to be the time necessary for the end of the umbilical cord to dry up and drop off. Naturally, infected navels occur fairly often and are treated with poultices of mashed leaves. The dried end of the umbilical cord is saved in an areca basket. When the child is able to crawl, the cord is placed on a bundle of corn, which is presented to the maternal grandmother, or, if she is dead, to some equivalent kin. When the grandmother accepts the gift, the bit of cord is flicked off and ignored. 846

During the four to six days spent in the house, the mother rests and devotes herself exclusively to fondling and feeding the infant. At this time the child's warm water baths are begun. Depending on the solicitude of the mother, these warm baths are repeated at least every two or three days, until the child can walk. After that it is bathed in cold water. 854

The mother's material needs during the period of confinement are primarily the concern of her brother and secondarily the concern of 846 593

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her sisters and mother. Here again the father is excluded. The mother's brother should carry firewood for her and bring presents of food. In general he is expected to dance attendance, and his failure to do so may lead to resentment and reproaches from his sister. The gifts and attention the mother receives at this time are considered an encouragement to care properly for the child, as though she would otherwise be neglectful. They also serve to assert the claim of the woman's family on the infant. There are instances of affinal kin's having been so enraged at what they felt to be the negligence of parents that they have taken violent action. (For a case in point see Mangma's autobiography, page 212.)

The father of the child, meanwhile, is supposed to refrain from any vigorous work such as digging, chopping wood, or rat hunting. He idles about, inactive and without any definite function, in a household centering around his wife and child, who are in the hands of his affinal kin. Should the child be sickly in the early weeks of life, the mother is sure to question the father about his activities during this period of seclusion. He will rack his brains to recall any infringement of the prescribed precautions. Once he remembers, it is easy enough to undo the harm by picking some leaves at the place of transgression, confessing his error, and at the same time urging the soul of the child to enter the leaves. He then goes home and strokes the sick child's head with the leaves, after dipping them in water. The straying soul returns and the child recovers.

The father is obviously in a peculiar position. Although he is responsible for the child and has an intimate connection with its well-being, he is at the same time without any positive functions and has only restrictive obligations.

The extent of the father's responsibilities in the face of his disfranchisement is illustrated by a case where the child died in infancy. Fantan had already lost two sons shortly after birth. His lineage was deficient in males and he was unusually worried when the latest child, four days after birth, began to cry excessively and refuse the breast. His wife's kin and interested neighbors divined to discover which spirits might have been offended. The process was repeated several times, and each time it was Fantan who had to pay for the divination and for the animals necessary to placate the offended supernaturals. It cost him approximately two rupiahs and five chickens. Since he was working for wages in my service, he was particularly liable to be asked for payments in Dutch currency. The outlay represented about two weeks' work, yet he was hardly ever present during these efforts to discover and treat the source of the child's illness.

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Fantan was obviously distressed by the situation but insisted on working with me each day, saying there was nothing he could do at home. When finally wailing was heard from the direction of his house, he knew the child had died. He went home immediately, but it was not considered good form for him to enter the house crowded with wailing women. At last a neighbor went in, took the dead child from its mother's arms, and hurried off alone to bury it in a near-by field. At this point Fantan put his head down on his knees and broke out into hard dry sobs, which he tried to suppress. Weeping is considered unmanly by the culture and therefore he had less outlet than his wife, of whom wailing was expected. Characteristically enough, however, Fantan was able to transform his grief into anger almost immediately, for at that moment a friend arrived to report that his brother-in-law had just killed one of his penned pigs in order to force him to give a death feast, an expense quite unwarranted for so young a child. Fantan said as he started toward his pigpen, "I have had enough expenses. Why should my brother-in-law kill my pig, since he didn't even come to be with his sister when her child died?"

DESCENT FROM THE HOUSE

Four to six days after the birth the first descent of the mother and child into the outside world is marked by a trivial ceremony in which a few neighboring kinswomen may assist. The maternal grandmother, or some surrogate, plants sweet potatoes and piles stones near the house verandah. The plants and stones may be represented by weeds nd pebbles. By this act she releases both the mother and the father from the restrictions on vigorous labor. A few other precautionary measures may be taken, all within the range of sympathetic magic. The mother then leaves the house and is bathed for the first time since giving birth. Tubesful of water are poured over her back, arms, and legs. That afternoon the father gives a small feast to repay the wife's kin for their contributions and services. For a few more days the mother is inclined to stay near the house and perform only the easier household tasks.

The descent from the house marks the beginning of a wider diet for the child. At this time premasticated roasted bananas and vegetable gruels are added to breast feeding. The gruel is poured into the mouth from a coconut-shell spoon. The premasticated bananas are given the infant either with the hand or directly from the adult's mouth.

At this time, too, the infant's contacts expand. He begins to be a center of interest and is passed from hand to hand. Everyone seems entranced by small babies and many people will ask to hold and fondle

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854 them. My impression is that young men were even more inclined to fondle infants than young women, although I made no quantitative study of this. The impression—if accurate and not simply an exaggeration born of the contrast with attitudes in our own culture—might be explained by the greater leisure that young men possess.

The effect of this handling on the psychological development of the child may be expected to vary with the size of the community in which it lives. An infant who spends its life in a remote field house will have fewer contacts with strangers than one brought up on the edge of a dance place in a large community. How far parents recognize this is unknown, but I never saw one who was unwilling to surrender the child to an interested adult and who did not seem pleased at the attention lavished on the baby. Only if the child showed fright or cried vigorously would a parent take it back, usually with a deprecatory smile and the comment that it was afraid.

Fondling in Atimelang consists largely of rocking and joggling the child and of mouthing it. Kissing is not known for either adults or children, but an infant's arms, legs, and whole trunk will be caressed with mock bites of the lips. The procedure is quite evidently, consciously, and significantly an eating gesture. This connection between food and affection is one that recurs repeatedly and in many contexts.

GOING BACK TO WORK

1962 846 Since women are primarily responsible for garden work and the subsistence economy, mothers return to regular field work ten days to two weeks after the birth of the child. It is not customary for the mother to work with the child on her back or even near her, as it is in some societies. Instead the infant is left at home in the care of some kin, for example the father, an older sibling of either sex, or a grandmother whose field labor is less effective or necessary than that of a younger woman.

853 This practice results in great variation in the amount of attention and satisfactory feeding that infants get during this first period of life. Some women have fewer responsibilities than others in the number of people for whom they must provide and are therefore less occupied with field work. Others may have given birth during the early part of the dry season when labor is relatively slack, so that two or three months may pass before they have to resume intensive gardening. Still others may be lazy and use the care of the child as an excuse to slight their field work. But if an infant is left daily in the care of a substitute mother, it is going to be hungry part of the time. The person caring for

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think of the gardens. They played. My uncle would say to them, "Look at your Younger House. They remember the fields. Their father doesn't have to hit them even once." At that time I had a long, wide garden all my own. Father shot a big pig there, and we used its meat for the new corn feast. 159x

March 27, 1939

[Kolangkalieta had danced all night and was very sleepy. I suggested that she wait until the following day, which she seemed eager to do.]

March 28, 1939

Last night I dreamed that my soul went to a field to pick young corn and greens. I went also to see how the rice was growing. On the way back I felt very sleepy in my dream, because I had danced the night before. When I reached home I cooked, ate with the children, and went to sleep early in the evening. I dreamed I woke the next morning and went to pick beans. After taking them home I went to another field to cut weeds. In the evening my soul came home and slept. The third day I went again to the fields and picked beans. I worked all day, returned to the village, cooked, ate, and then went to fetch water. After returning to the house with the water, I set out again to pick beans. My soul went to my gardens to look for them. When I came home with them, I didn't shell them but just put them all in a pile. Then Langmai's father called from Folafeng, asking me to take care of Manimai [her newborn grandson]. I sat there awhile, but then I thought, "It is almost dark. I had better go home and fetch some beans." So I went to pick beans again and filled a large basket. I decided I had better pick all the beans in that field. Then I came home and slept. The next day I went to my field to cut weeds. On the way home I decided to gather beans and corn. When I got home people were calling me again from Folafeng. I said, "Why do you call all the time? Why don't you come down and speak to me?" I went up. It was time to bring Manimai out of the house for the first time after his birth. I helped give him his first bath [customary when a child is taken out of the house for the first time]. In the evening I went back to my house, cooked, and searched for beans near the house. Then I woke up. I slept from early evening until dawn. I didn't sleep all day after the dance, so I slept hard last night. [I doubt that this was a dream. It is, however, an excellent example of her daily routine of life.] [847]

[Meaning of the dream?] We are always going to the gardens for